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REMARKS

Applicants appreciate the examination of the present application that is evidenced by the Official Action of April 15, 2008. Nonetheless, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the outstanding rejections because all of the claims of the present application are entitled to the priority date of July 22, 2002, which is the filing date of US Provisional Application Serial No. 60/397,639. This priority date predates the October 16, 2002 filing date of US Patent No. 7,185,141 to James et al., which means that James et al. cannot properly support the 35 USC 102(e) rejections of the pending claims. Moreover, many of the claims of the present application are also fully entitled to the priority date of June 18, 2001, which is the filing date of the parent application (US 10/613,542, now US 6,996,662). This priority date predates the earliest possible priority date associated with any disclosure of James et al.

Provisional Application Serial No. 10/271,660 Does Not Fully Support James et al.

Applicants respectfully submit that the disclosures of US Patent No. 7,185,141 to James et al., which the Examiner has relied on to reject Claims 1-57, are not adequately supported by the subject matter of US Provisional Application Serial No. 60/343,973, filed December 27, 2001. Because of these limitations, Applicants submit that James et al. is only entitled to its October 16, 2002 filing date, which is subsequent to the July 22, 2002 filing date of Applicants' US Provisional Application Serial No. 60/397,639. In contrast, Applicants' provisional application supports all claims of the present application because its disclosure is essentially word-for-word identical to the disclosure of the present utility application.

The Examiner has cited many portions of James et al. to support the rejections of Claims 1-57 of the present application. These portions of James et al. include: Col. 6, lines 22-29 and 53-67; Col. 6, lines 30-42; Col. 6, lines 43-67; Col. 9, lines 57-59; Col. 14, lines 36-39; and Col. 9, lines 36-42. Applicants submit, however, that these cited portions of James et al. are not fully enabled by

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the US Provisional Application Serial No. 60/343,973 and the Examiner has made no allegation that they are. Applicants submit, therefore, that the Examiner has not supported any *prima facie* case that James et al. is prior art to Claims 1-57 of the present application.

Many of Claims 1-58 Are Entitled to the June 18, 2001 Priority Date of Miller et al.

The present application is a continuation-in-part (CIP) of US 6,996,662 to Miller et al. and many of the claims of the present application are fully supported by Miller et al. To assist the Examiner, Applicants call the Examiner's attention to pages 32-37 of the present application, which describe the embodiment of FIG. 7. This embodiment of FIG. 7 is identical to the embodiment of FIG. 3 of Miller et al. and many of the claims of the present application are fully supported by this embodiment.

In particular, Applicants submit that Claim 1 is fully supported by FIG. 7 of the present application and FIG. 3 of Miller et al., which illustrates how the priorities of multiple active hit signals can be resolved by an array priority encoder **20"**. As described at pages 32-37 of the application, this array priority encoder uses both soft priority values (stored in programmable register 52') and a hard priority (HP) value for each CAM array block to resolve a priority competition between multiple active hit signals (HITn). These same arguments apply equally to the subject matter of independent Claims 6, 15, 19, 22-24, 29, 34-35, 38, 48, 51 and 56-58.

Independent Claims 30-33, 36 and 46 Are Patentable Over James et al.

Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 30-33, 36 and 46, which are entitled to a July 22, 2002 priority date, are patentable over James et al. for at least the following reasons. In particular, Claim 30 recites "wired-OR logic" that performs soft priority resolution operations. Aspects of this wired-OR logic are described with respect to FIG. 6A beginning at page 27 of the application. In particular, FIG. 6A and page 27 describe the operation of wired-OR logic that is responsive to soft priority signals (e.g., P4_0 - P4_6 in FIG. 6A-2), active hit signals (e.g., HIT4) and hierarchical control signals (e.g., AH[0]-AH[6]). Applicants submit that the use of

this wired-OR logic has essentially nothing to do with the performance of a "logical OR-type operation between a given data value and one or more memory locations," as disclosed at Col. 9, lines 57-59 of James et al. Moreover, Applicants submit that this particular disclosure of James et al. cannot find any support in US Provisional Application Serial No. 60/343,973. Accordingly, even if the Examiner's conclusion with respect to "wired-OR logic" is correct, which it is not, James et al. is not prior art to Claim 30 of the present application. These arguments apply equally to independent Claims 31 and 36 and the many other dependent claims that recite the wired-OR logic.

Likewise, the subject matter of Claims 32-33 is not disclosed or suggested by James et al. because James et al. nowhere discloses or suggests the use of hierarchical control signals (see, e.g., AH[0] -AH[6] in FIG. 6A-2) that are compared against competing soft priority input signals. Applicants acknowledge that FIG. 4B of James et al. discloses a comparator 458 that compares two soft priority values to determine which one is higher, but this aspect of James et al. does not suggest using hierarchical control signals – which enable competition between equivalent soft priority input signals so that a priority "tie" can be detected and subsequently resolved with a hard priority resolution circuit. These arguments apply equally to many of the dependent claims that recite the use of hierarchical control signals.

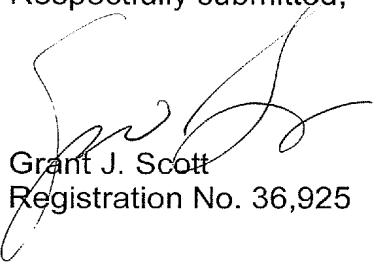
Independent Claim 46 recites the use of precharged signal lines to resolve competing soft priorities. To reject this claim, the Examiner has apparently relied on Col. 14, lines 36-39 of James et al. However, this disclosure of James et al., which is only entitled to a priority date of October 16, 2002 and is therefore not prior art against Claim 46, is merely describing the conventional use of precharged match lines (ML) to support search operations within a CAM array (i.e., when a search operation is being performed between an applied search key and entries within the CAM array). Accordingly, this disclosure of James et al. has little, if any, relevance to the subject matter of Claim 46 relating to soft priority resolution. Similar arguments also apply to dependent Claims 10, 14 and 25-27.

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CONCLUSION

Applicants have shown that all claims of the present application are entitled to a priority date of July 22, 2002 and that many of the claims are entitled to a priority date of June 18, 2001. Applicants have also distinguished many of the claims from the disclosure of James et al. and have shown that James et al. is not fully entitled to a December 27, 2001 priority date of US 60/343,973. For at least these reasons, Applicants submit that all pending claims are now in condition for allowance, which is respectfully requested.

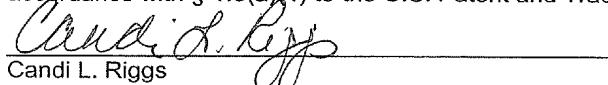
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